

Ecofeminisms, Knowledge and Political Action

Speakers:

- Gea Piccardi (Center for Social Studies, Portugal)
- Irina Castro (Center for Social Studies, Portugal)

Moderator: Paula Sequeiros (Climáximo)

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More information about this panel:

<https://climaximo.wordpress.com/2018/12/09/ecofeminismos-conhecimento-e-acao/>

GEA PICCARDI briefly presented the materialist and socialist **ecofeminist theories** (Carolyn Merchant, Mary Mellor, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, Ariel Salleh) and theories of how this feminist thought, by means of a critical reevaluation of andocentric Marxist theory, the focus of which is exclusively on production, **established a relationship between ecological exploitation and the exploitation of women and centred the discussion on the dialectic between production and reproduction, making this last the central category of her analysis.**

Materialist ecofeminism equally analyses how the sexual division of labour, at an internal level, has transformed into an

international division of labour at the moment of the expansion of capital, so that **slave and migrant labour are an indispensable condition for the development of the so-called First World** – there is no waged labour without reproductive labour and the maintenance of this production logic is only possible from the expansion of reproductive labour to other areas, in this case the exploitation of nature and of other peoples. **Genocide, biocide and ecocide always go hand-in-hand.** Neoliberalism is a new period of primitive accumulation of capital and of enclosure of the commons, which constitutes an attack on the reproduction of life and the body of women.

This ecofeminist analysis has received some criticism on the part of decolonial theorists (Chandra Mohanty, for example), due to the fact of the theory **essentialising and universalising the category of woman**, reproducing a heteronormative and colonial interpretation of gender, and thus excluding all of the other possible subjectivities; but **also for not having integrated an intersectional criticism** which establishes a connection between race, ethnicity, religion and the environment. This Eurocentric view, which could cause epistemic violence, doesn't understand the woman-environment connection which comes from subordinate fights, consequentially impeding the creation of cross-sectional alliances with diverse positions, which would allow the construction of shared feminist ecological practices, not only against capitalism and the patriarchy, but also against neocolonialism.

Indigenous decolonial thought and criticism must be absorbed by materialist ecofeminism in a way that

radicalises its own theories and questions its Eurocentric matrix. Decolonial proposals recover the subversion of knowledge and practices belonging to ancestral indigenous communities and only through the idea of communality (Cristina Vega, Raquel Gutierrez Aguillar, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Lorena Cabnal) can the women-nature relationship be understood and alternative, anticapitalist, antipatriarchal feminist ecologies and economies be constructed. Gender cannot be separated from the political relations of communality. **Communality, in which reproductive labour is socialised, and the common production of knowledge are two of the strategies for decolonising feminism proposed by indigenous feminists.**

To conclude, indigenous feminism offers yet another category which criticises materialist ecofeminism, which is the relation between the **“Body-Territory and the Earth Territory”** (Lorena Cabdal), both subject to the same patriarchal violence. This relationship is an essential element to any community political practice, given that humans and nature are the same interdependent body.

IRINA CASTRO brought us a **reflection on the capitalist production of knowledge and of science, through the study of dissident women in a scientific context**, above all in the branches of biology, epigenetics and theory of evolution (Rachel Carson, Lynn Margoulis, Joan Roughgarden and Helena Alvarez Buylla). Debates about science focus too much on the impacts of the same and rarely on its production in a capitalist system and, as such, **dissidence is the ideal space for**

us to understand the mechanisms of coercion of capital on the forms of production of knowledge.

Just like its own epistemological production, scientific dissidence has also always been focused on men and their work, so obliterating not only new knowledge constructed from a gendered perspective, but also a new history of knowledge.

Women dissidents in science are those who have criticised the capitalist production of knowledge, while male dissidence centres exclusively on conflicts between diverging academic knowledge. Dissident women promote the expansion of a cognitive justice and a **response-able science (response-ability)**, or, a science whose capacity of response acts upon the concrete problems of life and constructs new knowledge which is capable of dialogue with other epistemologies than just Western/white, modern and technological. **These women have been discredited, demonised and distanced by mainstream science.**

Female scientific dissidence promotes a model of the production of science which denounces the colonialism of the capitalist ethic, misogyny, and racism in the algorithm and the premeditated occlusion of other knowledges. **An anticapitalist science has to be a joint study of ethics, ontology, and epistemology, and the relationships which occur between human and non human beings in the construction of the world. It should also be constructed by community,** and finally put to one side the idea of the pure individual genius scientist. A socialist science has to be a symbiosis between ecological thought and anticapitalist feminist materialist criticism, putting an end to the myth of passive nature and of a

technology dissociated from political, social and material conditions.

The construction of an alternative anticapitalist science is not a Utopian project, and has already existed for several decades, it is not necessary to start from scratch – it is **already being practiced by dissident women**.

Questions:

- Why speak specifically of female dissidence?
- What does “good science” and “bad science” mean, and what is the true reach of the scientific method?
- What is the problem with genetically modified organisms?
- What is engaged science? Does it exist?
- What is the difference between women in science and feminist science?
- Feminism and the colonialist production of science and of knowledge (the necessity of counter-hegemonic theories);
- Connections between patriarchy and capitalism;
- Links between extraction and reproduction;
- What could feminist technologies be?
- How to teach ecofeminism and ecosocialism in schools?